

RECLAMATION

Managing Water in the West

2nd Quarter 2019

Reclamation's
Newsletter on
Safety and
Occupational
Health

The Safety Factor

Editor's Message: YOU Are Your Coworkers' Keeper

By MRutheyi Thompson, Denver Safety Office

Whether it's being part of a family, a club, a collective, a tribe, or an "I Care About Safety" workforce, all have a common component. Every person in the group is vital to the success of the whole. To truly care about the whole, you must care about 'the one'. In my Native American tribe, we learn this lesson through word and deed from our birth. My *amá sání* (grandmother) passed away this past March 21. She and her four sisters, my great aunties, educated seventeen grandchildren in the necessity of caring for each member of our clan and our tribe. For when one person is not able to perform their part for the good of the clan and tribe, it is as if finger or a foot is missing. The body cannot function properly without those parts. Neither can a collective group succeed with a person missing.

How does this relate to our workforce? Imagine if your coworker is about to walk into a confined space without it having been cleared for entry. Or your coworker is carrying a lightweight box, but it obscures their view and they are about to trip over a trash can. Or you are riding with a supervisor who is driving over the speed limit or without properly adjusted mirrors. What would you do? You say "I Care About Safety," but if you do not speak up to protect your coworker from potential harm, then you are only giving lip service to those words.

To truly mean "I Care About Safety" means YOU are your coworkers' keeper. You look out for them. You care about their wellbeing. You speak up when needed. You encourage use of JHAs (Job Hazard Analysis) and SOPs (Standard Operating Procedures) and review them regularly. You suggest using 5 Minute Safety Talks and toolbox/tailgate safety meetings.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Editor's Message: YOU Are Your Coworkers' Keeper.....	1-2
Did You Know : SMIS Dashboard	2
RSWS Download for Apple Devices ..	2
SMIS and You	3
Safety Factor Editorial:	
All By Myself.....	3
Safety Focus: Lone Worker Safety—How to Help Your Coworkers Who Are Lone Workers	4,8
Safety Spotlight: Coordinated Fire Department Training 2018 at Folsom Dam	5
Be Dog Aggression Savvy	6
Toolbox Corner: 5 Minute Safety Talk	
Keep an Eye out for Slip, Trip and Fall Hazards	7
Why We Use JHAs	9
Did You Know Stats: On-the-Job Death Rates	9
HVSA: What It Is and Why You Might Need It	10

(continued on Page 2)



RSHS Download for Apple Devices

If you use an Apple device and want to have *RSHS* (The Yellow Book) handy on your phone, go to <https://intra.usbr.gov/safety>.

Find the link for the RSHS app download. Follow the instructions in the link. Make sure you are on a Waternet network. You'll be able to download a full *RSHS* in pdf format.

Look for news in *The Safety Factor* and the website above when the RSHS has been updated and it's time to download an new version.

Editor's Message

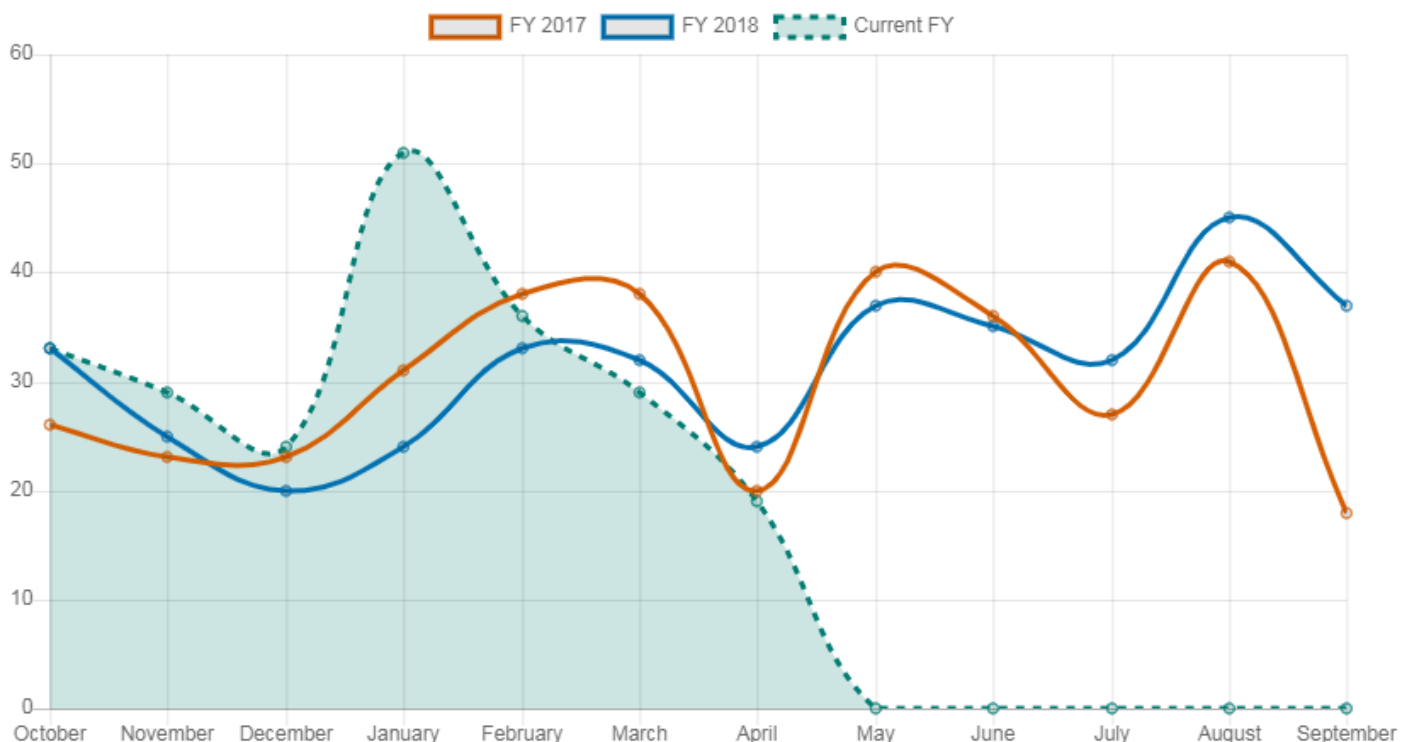
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You get your required safety training and ask if others have done the same. You think about the families of your coworkers, how they would feel if your coworker got injured on the job. Every injury to one of your colleagues hurts your heart. You are dedicated to making sure safety isn't a four-letter word, but a mantra for every task you and your coworkers do.

Reclamation has been blessed to have very few fatalities in the past fifteen years. Still, any death in our Reclamation family is one too many. Same with any injury our workforce suffers. Reclamation relies on each and every one of us to complete our vital mission. When one of us is injured and missing from work, we are incomplete and hurting. Let us all promise to take the message of "I Care About Safety" seriously and become our coworkers' keeper.

Did You Know: SMIS Dashboard

All Reclamation Accidents, FY 2017 – Present



Safety Factor Editorial Corner

All By Myself

By MRutheyi Thompson, Denver Safety Office

It was a perfect spring day in western Colorado. Perfect temp. Perfect ratio of fluffy, happy little clouds to the vast, vibrant blue sky. Perfect light breeze. A truly perfect day to be out doing field work, evaluating one of Reclamation's recreational facilities.

Equipped with clipboard, eval questions, pen, camera, and cell phone and wearing the appropriate PPE, I started systematically doing the inventory and evaluation I had planned to do that day. Work progressed nicely. A break for lunch. Some nature watching while eating. All was going perfectly.

Then it happened. Shortly after lunch, I was stung by a hornet I had startled when laying down a line of tape measure. For most people, such a sting is merely an uncomfortable annoyance with minor pain and swelling. For me, it could mean death. I was prepared with my Benadryl dissolving strips and my EpiPen. I ended up using both. It wasn't the first time I have had to do this. But this time was more terrifying. Why is that you ask?

I was working alone. My cell phone had spotty coverage, and when I tried to call out to my supervisor, the call would not connect. Not another single person had come to this recreation area that day. I was fearful of what would happen if the meds did not work and I could not get myself back to the GOV and drive myself to a hospital or to an area with cell phone coverage.

I realized then that being a lone worker is truly risky. Despite my best preparations, I was in danger if the meds did not work. That day, the meds did exactly what they should and I was able to get back to the GOV and drive back to the office. That was 14 years ago in April.

Since then, cell phone coverage has improved but some Reclamation employees still work in remote locations or in structures that obstruct signal. Many Reclamation offices have personal emergency locator devices for use by lone workers. I've seen some JHAs that note and address lone worker safety. But still, it's risky business being a lone worker.

The Reclamation Safety Office will be working on this issue, as part of the *RSHS* revisions and providing guidance on ways to improve lone worker safety. We do not have all the answers. We need your input and ideas. I experienced the fear of being a lone worker in potential distress. I know I am not alone. Let's all work together so that no one has that feeling of panic and alarm. Together we can make a difference in lone worker safety. Together we can show how much "I Care About Safety."



Hornet—Image courtesy of Wikipedia

SMIS and You

What is SMIS? you ask. SMIS stands for Safety Management Information System. It is the Department of Interior database and reporting system for accidents, injuries, and near misses. If you see a hazardous condition or witness a near miss ("good catch") situation, SMIS is the way to get that information to your local, regional, and agency safety pro-

fessionals. Without your input, these professionals cannot find all the things that need to be corrected. You are the key to making our workplace safer and more productive through using the Near Miss module of SMIS. So, if you see something, say something. Because we all care about safety!

<https://www.smis.doi.gov/>

Safety Focus: Lone Worker Safety — How to Help Your Coworkers Who Are Lone Workers

By MRutheyi Thompson, Denver Safety Office

A lone worker is typically someone who works alone at a satellite location or is conducting business away from their office, such as visiting remote sites or conducting field surveys or interviews in private homes or other non-public locations. Workers traveling on their own or who work alone on nights or weekends are also lone workers. By law, every employer is responsible for protecting their workers, whether they are in a lone worker situation or surrounded by coworkers.



Snakes are common hazards

Safety for lone worker situations is more than just being extra observant or extra careful. It begins with planning the work and thinking of the risks and hazards of both the tasks *and* being alone when working. The JHA is a good tool for risk identification

and can prompt you if a risk analysis is needed. Maybe the work should not be done alone or more hazard mitigation should be done prior to the single employee going out to do the work by their self. The JHA also helps identify procedures and tools that can help the lone worker have access to emergency notification and first responders in the case a hazard becomes an injury or unsafe condition.

Still, the employee planning to work alone is not truly alone if their colleagues and supervisors truly “Care About Safety.” In a brother/sister keeper safety culture, it may seem hard to have your colleague’s back if that colleague is a lone worker. There are things you can do back at the home base to aid their safety without leaving the office.

- Help review their JHA. You may not have been a lone worker before, but you may have a different perspective and think of something your coworker has not. Invite other coworkers to also review the JHA. Have a brainstorming session with a small group and your lone worker colleague to find potential risks and hazards for the work they are going to do.
- Be a communications monitor. Part of a lone worker plan is regular communications between the worker and a colleague or supervisor at the office. If you are not the point of contact for the regular check-ins, then you can be a communications monitor. Know who the contact point is and when the check-ins are supposed to be; then ask the contact point if they have heard from the lone worker. You can be a reminder and second line of protection for your coworkers.
- Participate in the after-work breakdown; also called an after action review, a debriefing or lessons learned. Whatever you call it, you can be a sounding board for the lone worker employee to discuss what went well, what needs improvement, and what did not work. You can provide feedback about their evaluations and experiences as well.



Dogs: aggressive alone or in packs

(continued on Page 8)

Safety Spotlight: Coordinated Fire Department Training 2018 at Folsom Dam

The first week of October 2018, the five fire departments surrounding Folsom Dam that would respond in the event of an actual emergency came together for a joint training exercise. They conducted training at the power plant and the base of the emergency spillway.



The first responders practiced a simulated rescue from the cabin of the gantry crane above the power plant. Another exercise simulated a rescue at the base of the emergency spillway for a scenario in which multiple cars have gone over an elevated passageway like a bridge or dam.



Reclamation employees learned valuable lessons on escorting procedures in emergency situations and on how much clearance first responders need to conduct rescue operations. The fire departments gained critical knowledge of specific hazards Reclamation staff and contractors face at Folsom Dam and the steps and procedures Reclamation employees must follow prior to any rescue attempts.

Over 120 fire personnel and first responders participated; zero injuries were reported, no damage occurred to government property, and the Folsom City Council presented an award to Reclamation for the efforts to coordinate this training.

Original article by Baudelio Diza, Central California Area Office, Mid Pacific Region (edited for space by *Safety Factor* staff)

Find a link to the full article at <https://intra.usbr.gov/safety>

Be Dog Aggression Savvy

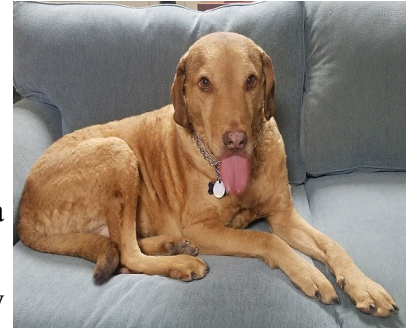
By Joan Casement, Denver Safety Office

In 2018 Denver, Colorado, ranked number seven out of ten for the most *dog – friendly cities* by smartasset.com (<https://smartasset.com/mortgage/most-dog-friendly-cities-america-2018>). It seems everyone has at least one dog and sometimes more. Most dog owners, myself included, enjoy taking our dogs to a dog park. A big concern for all dog owners is aggression.

There are many types of aggression. Some of them overlap; others are mutually exclusive. Each dog has a combination of some of the traits. No dog will cub-hole into all the categories, and aggression is never "just" aggression.

A few examples of aggression are, but are not limited to,

- territorial (guarding the home and yard but not the dog's people) ,
- natural Protection (guarding the dog's human but not the yard or house),
- defense (guarding the dog's own body), and
- dominance (the dog decides when and what they will dominate).



Mojo, a Chesapeake Bay Retriever



Calvin and Mojo

Defensive aggression is different than dominance, as dominance is not based in fear but rather in the dog's will. A dog with defensive aggression likely will curl his lip to bare his teeth, try to tuck his legs towards his abdomen (if on his side), and become very stiff. If standing, the dog may tuck his tail and lash out to bite without warning. Unlike guarding, defensive aggression has no useful purpose.

With dominance aggression, the dog may choose to use his teeth to prevent you from rolling him over. The dog may growl first, but there won't be the curling of the lip and teeth-baring associated with defensive aggression. Even the most dominant dogs generally can be made more tractable through effective obedience training. Learn more on the Chesapeake Bay Retriever Relief and Rescue webpage (<http://cbrrescue.org/cbrrescue/>).

With many different dog personalities at a dog park, any dog has the potential to be aggressive. We, as dog owners, can do several things to help prevent aggression issues:

- Know the personality of your dog. Some breeds have more of a tendency towards aggression, while other breeds do not, so we should be aware of how our dog reacts around other dogs.
- Be sure to keep an eye on your dog. If you see he is playing a little too aggressively with other dogs, be sure to stop this from escalating.
- Keep moving/walking. This will prompt your dog to periodically check your position and follow. A dog that keeps an eye on his owner is more likely to stay out of trouble.
- Know how to break up a dogfight if one should occur. The best way is to remain calm (ask screamers to be quiet), grab the fighting dogs by the hindquarters, and then lift their back legs off the ground. Once the legs are lifted, pull the dogs apart, stepping backward in a curve so that if a dog tries to redirect his fury back at you, he won't be able to reach you.
- Most importantly, be sure to pick up after your dog. This helps keep human aggression to a minimum.

Photos by Joan Casement

Toolbox Corner – 5 Minute Safety Talk



Keep An Eye Out for Slip, Trip and Fall Hazards



Slips, trips and falls are definitely no laughing matter.

In fact, following highway crashes, falls to a lower level are the second leading cause of preventable workplace fatalities according to *Injury Facts*®, 2017 Edition. Compared to falls to a lower level, falls on the same level tend to result in less severe, but more frequent injuries – more than 155,000 in 2014. With so much potential for harm, we should do everything possible to recognize fall hazards to prevent injuries from occurring.

View the World from a Safety Lens

The truth is that hazards are all around us. Sometimes it is difficult to see them, especially when we are working in familiar conditions. Instead of going through our usual routines, we should always stay vigilant and keep an eye out for safety. It could be as simple as noticing a tear in the carpeting, a box sticking out into a walkway or a spill on the floor.

While noticing something out of the ordinary is the first step, you must also know how to report a hazard in your organization. Perhaps you could clean up some water on the floor yourself, but stop and think – where is the water coming from? Is there a leaking ice machine in the break room? Your safety and facilities teams may need to step in. Or let's say it is a rainy day and people are tracking in water to the tile floor. Perhaps your organization needs to install a slip resistant mat or runner in the entryway. Don't just walk by and assume someone else will see a hazard or address it. You can be the catalyst to make these changes happen – you just need to keep your eyes open, think about the bigger picture and let someone know about your concerns.

Here are some other tips to help prevent falls to the same level:

- Don't hurry or walk too fast
- Watch where you are walking – even in familiar areas
- Avoid distractions like cell phones or reading while walking
- Wear proper footwear
- Look out for changes in elevation
- Don't obstruct your vision by carrying a large package – ask for help if needed
- Clean up spills immediately
- Pay attention to weather conditions

Prevent Falls from Heights

While not as common as falls to the same level, falls from heights are often deadlier. Fatal falls to a lower level typically involve injuries to the head or multiple body parts. Overall, about half of fatal falls to a lower level occur at heights of 20 feet or less, while 16 percent occur at heights of greater than 30 feet, according to *Injury Facts*, 2017 Edition.

Here are some tips to help prevent falls from heights:

- Be sure a job hazard analysis has been conducted and a fall protection plan is in place before beginning your work
- Wear the proper fall protection equipment for the job and be trained in how to use it
- Make sure fall prevention systems are in place, such as guardrails
- When using a ladder, maintain three points of contact at all times
- Do not use ladders outdoors in windy or inclement weather, and if the weather turns while you are on the ladder, descend immediately
- Place the base of the ladder on a firm, solid surface – never make your own "improvised" scaffolding

You can visit safety.nsc.org/fall-from-heights for more specific tips on falls from heights from the NSC Construction & Utilities Division.

Remember, if you fall, even if it is just a minor slip, please report it. Being involved in a fall doesn't make you "clumsy," and it is nothing to be ashamed of. Reporting every hazard and near miss can help to prevent something similar – or worse – from happening to someone else. Think about at least one change you can make today to help prevent yourself, or a coworker, from falling.



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Safety Focus: Lone Worker Safety

(continued from Page 4)



Still-looking waters can be deceptively swift



Usually docile, but unpredictable

- Be a champion of lone worker safety. Show your fellow workers that you care about their safety, especially when they are working alone. Encourage them to do JHAs, to use lone worker distress devices, and to set up a communications plan or travel plan, if applicable (see 2018 2nd Quarter's *Safety Factor* for more info). Having someone on their side, someone watching their back, makes a lone worker feel like part of a greater whole. They feel valued and that their safety is important, too. You will not only have that warm, happy feeling from contributing to a strong safety culture, but you may also be saving a life. Isn't that the best reason of all?

Safety is more than inspections of offices, workshops, power plants and warehouses. Safety is taking care of each other, no matter where our work occurs or whether done alone or in a group. Take time to plan the work, identify the hazards and risks, and choose the safest way to get the work done. Because we all care about safety.



Typically gentle, until they want your sandwich: then they become aggressive



Adorably cute, can carry diseases



Beautiful in bloom, painful to fall upon

Photos by MRutheyi Thompson, taken at various Reclamation facilities during her duties as a lone worker conducting site assessments for the Western Colorado Area Office.

Why We Use JHAs: Job Hazard Analysis

By Ken Somolinos, Denver Safety Office

"If four out of five safety offices have an air monitor, how many monitors would you find in fifteen safety offices?"

Not the hardest question in the world, is it? But how about this one: without looking back at the original question, how many times did the letter "F" appear? Now give yourself 10 seconds (use your phone or a friend to keep time) and go back and count them. Done? How many did you count? Go to the end of the article to check your answer. Were you correct?

The reason so many of us get this type of problem wrong is that our brains are great at taking shortcuts. This isn't inherently a bad thing: mental shortcuts can save us time and effort and often have no perceivable downside. However, shortcuts can also make us blind to easily avoidable errors, especially when we're in a hurry or working under pressure. When our personal wellbeing is on the line, are we comfortable taking on this unnecessary risk?

All this brings us to the importance of safety planning. The reason we write Job Hazard Analyses (JHAs) instead of using "mental JHAs" is to reduce the chance we overlook a hazard. If we do not identify a hazard, we cannot control the risks associated with it. When you think of a work task, you probably can think of several potential hazards and mitigations in your head. Similarly, you probably were able to estimate how many "Fs" appeared in the first sentence of this article without putting pen to paper. In both these cases, though, we risk making needless mistakes. When we write a JHA, we force ourselves to avoid taking mental shortcuts, decreasing the chance that we miss any potential hazards in any of the steps of the work. This is also why we review one another's JHAs: a second set of eyes reduces the likelihood we miss something obvious.

Counting letters in a sentence isn't hard, but we can get it wrong if we don't pay attention to detail. Planning our work safely using JHAs is no different. So if you don't think that paying attention to safety details is important, just ask yourself:

"I our out o ive saety oices have an air monitor, how many monitors would you ind in iteen saety oices?" The answer, of course, is thirteen.

Did You Know Stats: On-the-Job Death Rates – Workplace Fatalities at 10-Year High

OSHA reports that workplace fatalities are at the highest count in over a decade. In 2018, OSHA investigated 929 workplace fatalities; 2017 had only about 800 workplace fatalities. OSHA has the fewest number of safety inspectors in the history of their 48-year-old agency. While no direct correlation can be proved between the reduced number of OSHA inspectors and the spike in on-the-job deaths, OSHA and other watchdog organizations are extremely concerned that 2019's death count is on track to exceed 2018's.

HVSA: What It is and Why You Might Need It

By MRutheyi Thompson, Denver Safety Office

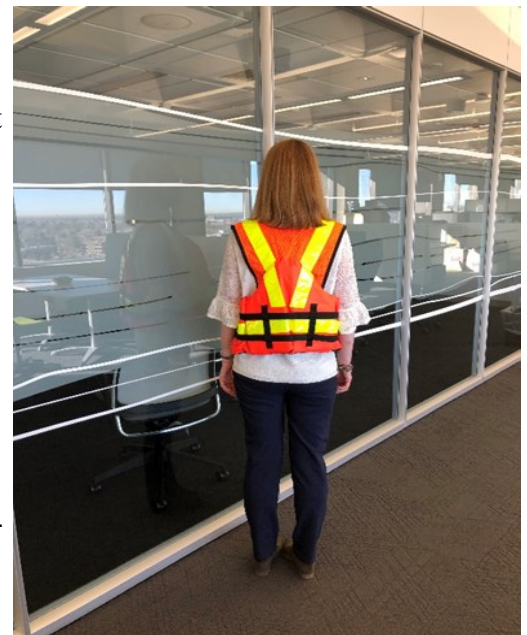
High-Visibility Safety Apparel, or HVSA as it's commonly called, is used when a worker is in a low-light or poor-visibility environment, working around moving vehicles (including forklifts, backhoes, cranes, and other heavy equipment) or working in high hazard situations where the worker needs to be located quickly for rescue. The goal of HVSA is to make the worker “stick out like a sore thumb” and be easily seen. The human eye responds best to large, vibrant patches of color and highly reflective surfaces. HVSA comes in three eye-catching combinations: fluorescent colors, retroreflective materials, or both. Most common is the use of both fluorescent color and retroreflective materials.

Reclamation conducts work in, near, and above large water bodies, and swift water conveyances. When on large water bodies, employees wear Personal Flotation Devices (PFDs). These PFDs are typically high-visibility, fluorescent colors only, without any highly reflective materials. If someone goes into the water wearing a large water body PFD, it is not difficult to see them by color alone. But what about when employees are working near or above swift waters?



Front of HVSA Swift Water PFD

About a decade ago, I worked on a construction project along a river bank. My crew and I wore the best PFD available at that time, but I commented that if we were to get caught in the swift-moving waters of the river, it would be harder to locate us than if we were in a lake or reservoir. That concern stayed with me for years. In June of 2017, I met an HVSA designer who was making innovative safety apparel. I told her my story and we decided to collaborate to make a PFD that was swift water rated *and* HVSA. In October of 2018 our crazy dream came to life.



Back of HVSA Swift Water PFD

Not everyone needs HVSA, but if you are working in a high hazard location or situation and you need to be easily located by others, please make note of this on your JHAs. Be seen, be safe.

Model: Joan Casement

Photos by MRutheyi Thompson